

Victoria Harbour Promenade closure to stretch through 2026

ATET legal mess lays bare major questions for the City of Melbourne



Docklands ready to come alive for seafood spectacular

Excitement around the new Docklands Waterfront Farmers' Market on May 17 has already started building, with the Victorian Fisheries Authority mascot, Pinky the Snapper, appearing alongside students from Docklands Primary School on Harbour Esplanade on May 4 to help promote the big day. More on page 7. Photo: Huda Shehzad.

## Funding announced for long-awaited second Docklands Primary campus

“Docklands Primary School appears to be a significant step closer to securing a permanent second campus, with new state budget funding announced for the purchase of land for an expansion of the fast-growing school.”

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



“A second campus for Docklands Primary School!” Cr Griffiths wrote in a Facebook post.

“It was fantastic to join Sheena Watt MP this morning to thank her for her leadership in securing funding for the land for a second campus for Docklands Primary School.”

“I’ve visited the school a number of times and the teaching there is so fantastic that it’s no surprise that every family wants to send their kids there.”

The announcement, made alongside Northern Metropolitan MP Sheena Watt, is likely to be welcomed by the Docklands school community, which has been pushing for certainty for years after the school rapidly outgrew its original site.

Docklands Primary only opened in 2021, but by early 2024 demand had already forced the government to establish a temporary second campus for Grade 5 and 6 students at The District Docklands retail precinct. That arrangement was always seen as a stopgap rather than a long-term solution.

While exact funding figures and the final location have not yet been confirmed, Docklands News understands the second campus is strongly expected to be delivered on the site directly opposite the current school, at the south-eastern corner of Little Docklands Drive and Footscray Rd.

The funding was revealed on May 1 by City of Melbourne councillor and Labor candidate for Melbourne Davydd Griffiths, who said the Allan Government’s latest \$1.6 billion education package included money to buy land for a second Docklands Primary School campus, as well as further funding for Arden Secondary College.

Continued on page 2.



DOCKLANDER, PAGE 10

## Docklands filmmaker Emily-Kate Murphy returns from New York with major award

For Docklands resident Emily-Kate Murphy, a recent trip to New York ended with more than just festival memories.



# HYPERLOCAL

NEWS

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# Funding announced for long-awaited second Docklands Primary campus

Continued from page 1.

That land has long been viewed by parents and local advocates as the logical answer. Development Victoria has earmarked the site for civic use as part of the broader development plans tied to Ashe Morgan's District Living project, and both the Victorian School Building Authority and City of Melbourne have previously been exploring options for its future use.

The prospect of that site finally being acquired for a permanent school expansion would be a significant breakthrough for local families, many of whom have spent the past two years pressing the government to act before the temporary arrangement at The District becomes entrenched.

It would also provide the school community with greater certainty around when students might eventually move out of the leased campus and into more permanent educational infrastructure.

In a statement to *Docklands News*, Cr Griffiths said, "Labor is building and upgrading more schools than anywhere else in the country, to support local communities like here in the Docklands."

"Docklands Primary School is one step closer to having an extra campus - because in this year's budget Labor is investing in land to build a new school."

The broader state education package, announced ahead of the 2026-27 budget, includes \$1.6 billion to build, expand and modernise schools across Victoria, with 19 new schools scheduled to open in 2026 and thousands of new student places to be created. The government has also framed the investment as part of its response to growth in rapidly developing communities and the need to support teachers and school



staffing.

For Docklands, however, the news is only part of the picture.

While a second primary campus has long been one of the suburb's most urgent needs, growing pressure also remains on the secondary side. University High School, which serves Docklands and much of the inner north-west, is already operating beyond capacity and has spilled into a leased CBD office building for its Year 9 cohort.

The government has announced a new secondary school for Arden by 2030, and further funding for that project has also now been flagged. But many local families

continue to question whether that school will arrive quickly enough, or be close enough, to ease the mounting pressures on inner-city students.

For now, though, the Docklands Primary announcement is a clear win for a school community that has been calling for action since almost the moment the school opened.

The next step will be for the government to confirm exactly how much money has been allocated, whether the long-discussed site opposite the school is indeed the one being acquired, and what timeline families can expect for delivery. ●

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# Victoria Harbour closure to stretch through 2026 as wharf damage proves worse than first feared

Docklands residents and visitors are facing a far longer disruption to one of the precinct's key waterfront spaces, with the City of Melbourne confirming that parts of Victoria Harbour Promenade will remain closed for the rest of 2026 after further testing revealed the wharf structure is in worse condition than first understood.

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



In an update to the community, the council said additional investigations had found that deterioration in the piles supporting the wharf was "more extensive than initially thought", meaning sections of the promenade were not safe for everyday public use and would need to remain fenced off for at least the remainder of the year.

The announcement marks a significant escalation from the earlier position taken by the council over summer, when restrictions were initially framed as precautionary.

As previously reported by *Docklands News*, parts of the promenade were first closed around the New Year period amid concerns about crowd loading, before more substantial fencing was later installed along the waterside edge from Harbour Esplanade through to Library at The Dock.

At the time, what appeared to be a

short-term safety response was already beginning to harden into something more serious. Now, the latest advice confirms the problem is not only structural, but likely to have a prolonged effect on public access and amenity in the heart of Victoria Harbour.

The closure removes continuous pedestrian access along the waterfront and has forced movement inland along the building line, weakening one of Docklands' most important public edges and altering how people interact with the harbour.

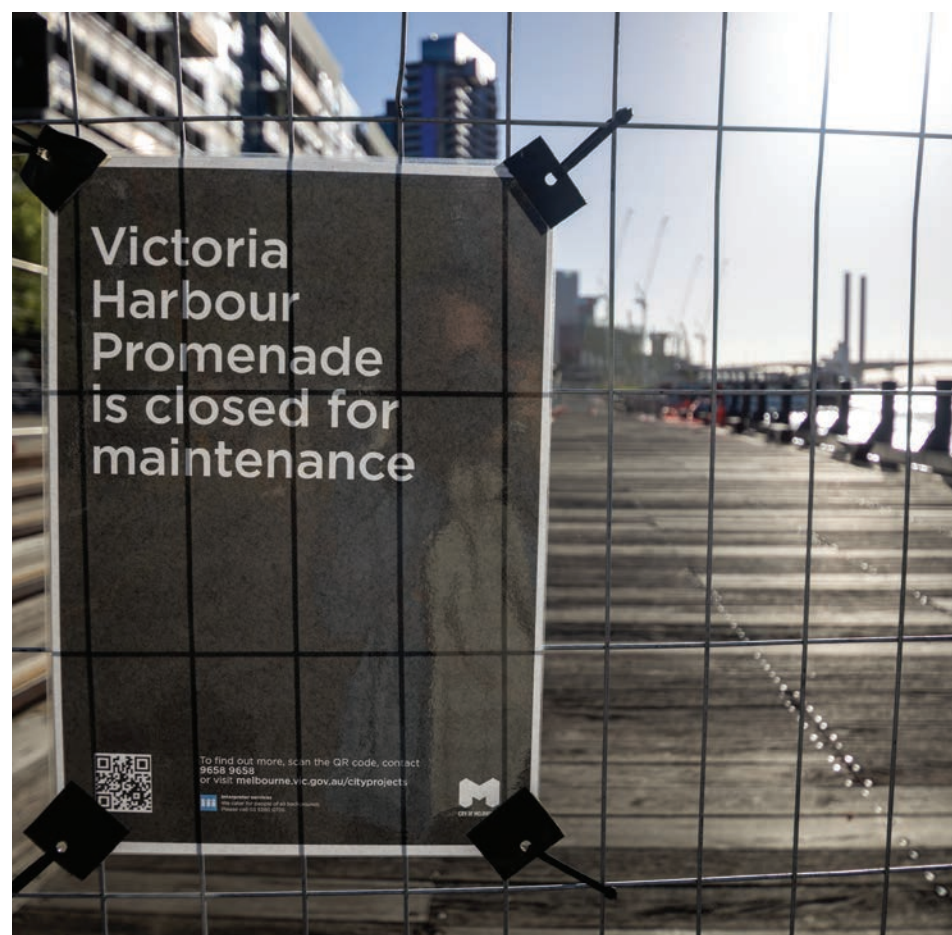
In its latest statement, the council said it was now working closely with Development Victoria on a "comprehensive plan" to address the structural issues, as well as to consider longer-term fencing and access arrangements to minimise impacts on the community.

That coordinated approach is important, given the split responsibilities along the harbour. As previously understood, most of the affected wharf falls under Development Victoria's control, while the remainder is managed by the City of Melbourne, making assessment and remediation more complex than if the asset sat under a single authority.

The scale of the deterioration is likely to raise further questions about the condition and longevity of Docklands' waterfront infrastructure more broadly, particularly given recent issues at NewQuay and other parts of the harbour edge.

It also reinforces earlier concerns that the problem may not simply be surface-level wear and tear, but deeper structural weakness in the supporting piles and associated infrastructure beneath the promenade.

For the Docklands community, the practical impact is immediate. What should be one of the precinct's defining public assets,



a direct, open promenade along the water, will remain partially lost for many more months, with no reopening date yet in sight.

The council acknowledged the frustration this would cause, saying it understood "the importance of getting this work done

as soon as possible" and that it would provide more detail on the works plan once it became available.

For updates, locals are encouraged to email [vicharbour@development.vic.gov.au](mailto:vicharbour@development.vic.gov.au) with "project updates" in the subject line. ●

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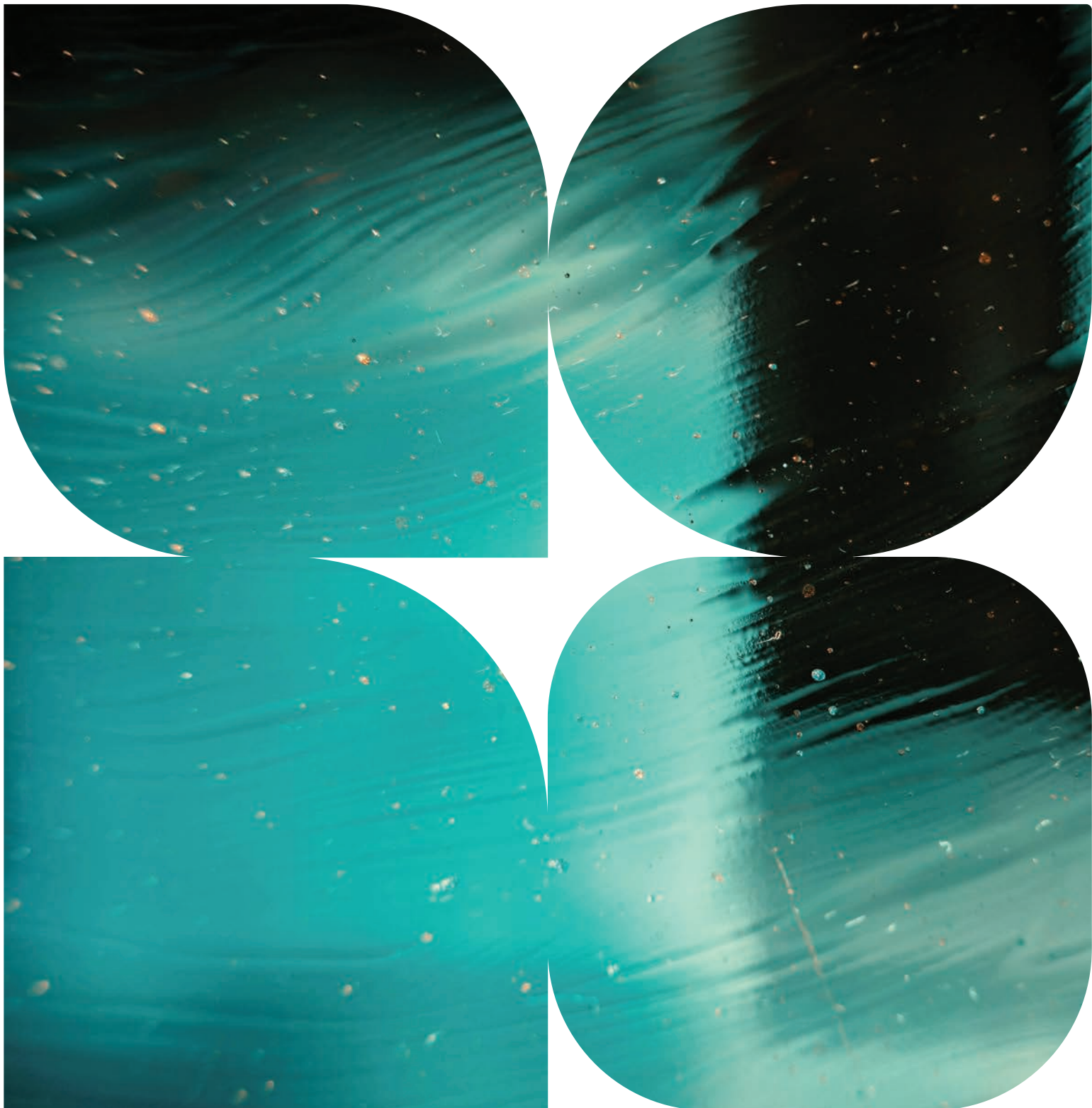
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# Docklands ready to come alive for Waterfront Farmers' Market seafood spectacular

“

Docklands is set to turn on the charm on Saturday, May 17, when the Docklands Waterfront Farmers' Market takes place on Harbour Esplanade in a much bigger, bolder and more colourful format.

”

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



Running from 10am to 3pm, the event is being led by the Docklands Chamber of Commerce, the City of Melbourne and Development Victoria, and promises to be one of the precinct's most exciting family-friendly activations in some time.

This is not just the return of a market. It is being pitched as a full waterfront festival, with fresh produce, seafood, live music, kids' activities and community fun all packed into one big day by the harbour.

The market also marks an important moment for Docklands more broadly. Lord Mayor Nick Reece told *Docklands News* the seafood-themed event was intended as a first step in testing the potential for Docklands to become a major seafood destination for Melbourne.

"This trial builds on the election commitment I made and also our most recent budget, which is about exploring the

potential to make Docklands a world-famous seafood destination," he said.

"A seafood-themed Docklands Farmers' Market is the first step in realising the potential of this idea."

And if the food offering is anything to go by, there will be plenty to tempt visitors. Cr Reece said the day would be "jam-packed with fun for the whole family", with dishes including paella, lobster rolls, lobster dumplings, mussels, caviar and more.

There will also be live entertainment throughout the day, including sea shanties, folk songs and singalongs, adding a playful maritime flavour to the event and making the most of Docklands' waterfront setting.

Families are also being encouraged to come along for the range of children's activities being organised by the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA), including Docklands' first kids' fishing clinic along Harbour Esplanade.

The VFA's Belinda Yim says it was "thrilled" to be offering the free clinics,

describing them as a great way to get children outdoors and introduce them to the excitement of catching a fish. The sessions are designed with beginners in mind, with all equipment and bait supplied and set up ready to use.

"Our team who run these fishing clinics are all avid anglers and love the opportunity to share their love for fishing and teach the future generation how to fish," Ms Yim told *Docklands News*.

Beyond the fishing clinic, the VFA will also have a broader kids' activation area featuring its education trailer, plaster art, colouring activities, fish anatomy dissection demonstrations and lure making run by VRFish, along with a "spin the wheel of fish" game and merchandise giveaways.

The authority said the event would also give families a chance to learn more about local waterways, sustainable fishing and the VFA's broader work across Victoria. It noted that more than \$175 million had been invested by the state government into

recreational fishing and boating since 2014, including fish stocking, boating access and improving Port Phillip Bay's appeal as a fishing destination.

The fishing activities also tie neatly into the market's seafood focus.

"The fishing clinic provides an opportunity for youngsters to learn how to harvest seafood, while also learning the tips and tricks on preparing and cooking seafood at other Docklands Waterfront Farmers' Market stalls and demos," Ms Yim said.

Excitement around the market has already started building, with Pinky the Snapper, the VFA mascot, appearing alongside students from Docklands Primary School on Harbour Esplanade on May 4 to help promote the big day.

The market will also offer free pet registration for City of Melbourne residents, with forms and tags available on site for pets not currently registered.

Cr Reece said the City would be watching closely to see how the concept landed with both locals and visitors.

"We're running this as a trial to see how the idea lands, see how locals and visitors take to it," he said.

For Docklands, it is another opportunity to show what the precinct can be when its public spaces are activated well: lively, welcoming and full of life.

And there may be more to come. The VFA said it was already in discussions with local stakeholders about the possibility of a future annual fishing and seafood event in Docklands later in the year.

So, whether you are there for the seafood, the shopping, the live music, the kids' activities or simply a day by the water, the message is clear: get down to Harbour Esplanade on May 17 and be part of it. ●

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### Melburnians could soon breathe easier outside libraries, sports centres and community hubs.

We're looking to expand smoke-free areas, with community consultation to begin on plans for a 10-metre smoking and vaping ban around more council facilities.

The proposal would increase the network from 16 areas to more than 70 locations across the municipality, including libraries, community centres, creative spaces and sports venues.

It's the next step in our Smoke-free Melbourne policy to protect the community from second-hand smoke and vape aerosol, reduce smoking rates and create healthier public spaces.

Many of the proposed areas are used daily by families,

young people and vulnerable community members, with consultation to begin later this year before returning to Council for consideration.

Public support is strong, with more than 70 per cent of respondents in favour, including 76 per cent at Queen Victoria Market and 72 per cent at Council administration buildings.

The move is part of Melbourne's work with the Partnership for Healthy Cities - a global network backed by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the World Health Organization and Vital Strategies that helps cities tackle public health challenges.

Melbourne is the only city in Australia and New Zealand in the network.

"The success of a city comes down to the health of its people -

that's why we're proud to be part of the Partnership for Healthy Cities." Community and City Services portfolio head Councillor Gladys Liu said.

Everyone deserves access to food that supports their health and wellbeing, but cost of living and pressures are making this difficult for many. Last year, almost half



Experts say there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke



Eduardo Cavaliere, Mayor of Rio de Janeiro

Earlier this month, representatives from member cities met in Rio de Janeiro to share ideas on tackling public health challenges.

"The summit highlighted how cities like Melbourne are leading the way in tackling complex public health challenges and creating safer, healthier communities," said Dr. Kelly Henning, who leads Public Health programs at Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Smoke-free areas are one focus of Melbourne's work through the Partnership for Healthy Cities network, but they're not the only public health issue on our radar.

of our residents experienced food insecurity, while nearly one in three skipped meals or were worried they would run out of food.

Since July 2024, the City of Melbourne has provided more than 10,000 free healthy meals as part of our FareShare Library Feeds program and supported communities to grow their own food.

"Whether it's clearing the air from harmful smoke or improving access to healthier food, we're making Melbourne healthier and more liveable." Lord Mayor Nick Reece said.

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CITY OF MELBOURNE

## Council backs Little India vision for Docklands with \$1.2 million budget commitment

“

The City of Melbourne has taken its clearest step yet towards establishing a Little India precinct in Docklands, with more than \$1.2 million allocated in the draft 2026-27 budget to progress the proposal through infrastructure, public realm upgrades, creative projects and events.

”



New Quay Central Park between Docklands Drive, Banksia Tower and the waterfront edge near the Melbourne City Marina Lounge.

That location would make some strategic sense. It sits close to Ron Barassi Snr Park, which has already hosted major Indian cultural celebrations including Holi, as well as The District Docklands and the Docklands Drive tram stop, which *Docklands News* gathers could potentially be renamed as part of the broader proposal.

The site also already has one modest but relevant commercial anchor in The Docklands Spice Lab, an Indian grocer adjoining the park. While considerably more work would be needed to attract additional Indian businesses and build a genuine precinct identity, the area offers the kind of physical and cultural links the council appears to be looking for.

In announcing the funding, the council

said the goal was to put Little India “on the map alongside Chinatown and Koreatown as a leading cultural precinct”.

Lord Mayor Nick Reece said the city was backing “the businesses, events and culture that create jobs and power our economy”, while Creative and Arts portfolio head Cr Philip Le Liu said: “As Australia’s most multicultural city, we’re taking big steps to make Little India a reality – investing in our creative and cultural future, because it’s at the heart of who we are.”

The announcement builds on strong local support expressed over the past year, particularly from within Docklands, where around 15 per cent of residents were born in India, according to the most recent Census.

But while the council’s budget allocation has been welcomed, some in the community are urging caution until more detail is released.

Little India Traders’ Association

representative Gautam Gupta said the group was “cautiously optimistic” but still waiting to understand exactly how the money would be spent.

“We don’t have the details about what the funding is being used for at the moment to really review it completely,” he said.

“The council did consult with us. Clearly the [Indian] community wants it, otherwise they will not make the announcement.”

“But the problem is when the delivery is done, we haven’t been told what they’re going to do with the money. We hope it’s a good solution for the community and society and can bring people together. So, we hope it’s more like a community solution rather than a political fix.”

That tension is likely to shape the next phase of the project. The broad concept of Little India has been well received, and many see it as a natural fit for Docklands, particularly after the success of recent Indian cultural events in the precinct. But translating that support into a real place with lasting identity, economic activity and community buy-in will depend on careful delivery.

Questions remain about how much of the \$1.2 million will go to physical upgrades, how much to programming and events, and what role traders, residents and Indian community groups will play in shaping the final outcome.

Still, with budget money now attached, Little India in Docklands appears closer than ever.

After years of searching for the right kind of activation and placemaking, Docklands may now be on the verge of gaining a cultural precinct that feels both locally grounded and internationally resonant. Whether it becomes a genuine destination or simply a symbolic gesture will depend on what the council does next. ●

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



The funding, announced as part of the council’s broader budget push to “bring our streets to life”, signals that Lord Mayor Nick Reece’s \$10 million 2024 election pledge for a Little India precinct is now moving beyond aspiration and into early delivery planning.

For Docklands, the announcement is significant. The suburb has long been floated as the most likely home for the precinct, given its large Indian community, growing event profile and available waterfront spaces.

*Docklands News* understands that while several options are still being explored, one area under consideration is around

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## Central Pier *Echo* lights up Victoria Harbour

A new light installation tracing the lost footprint of Central Pier has now been completed in Victoria Harbour, marking the first major heritage interpretation project delivered since the pier's demolition.

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



As *Docklands News* first reported last year, the temporary work, known as *Echo*, has been installed off Harbour Esplanade and uses around 145 illuminated marine buoys laid out in a grid to map the former shape of the pier.

Each buoy flashes individually on a slow rhythm, creating what Development Victoria describes as a visual "echo" of the structure that once extended into the harbour.

The installation is now operating and will run for about six months.

For Docklands, the work is significant both symbolically and visually. Central Pier was for years one of the precinct's defining landmarks, even as its long decline and eventual removal became one of the most contentious episodes in Docklands' recent history. In its place, the harbour has been left strikingly open, with the old pier's absence now as noticeable as the structure once was.

Development Victoria executive general manager precincts Niall Cunningham said *Echo* represented the beginning of a new phase for the waterfront.

"The removal of Central Pier has created a unique opportunity to honour its history and reimagine the waterfront, marking an important milestone in its revitalisation," he said.

Commissioned by Development Victoria and supported by Heritage Victoria, Parks Victoria and the City of Melbourne, the installation was designed by heritage interpretation graphic designers LookEar and Mono Design.

According to Development Victoria, the use of simple maritime objects commonly associated with port operations was intended to provide a strong visual reminder of both the scale and industrial character of the former pier.

"The use of the simple maritime items commonly seen in port operations will create a dynamic visual experience, especially at night, providing a clear overview of the pier's former scale and paying homage to its past," Mr Cunningham said.

The concept had been in development for some time as part of Development



Victoria's obligations under the heritage permit governing the pier's removal. At that stage, the project was understood internally as a form of "ghost" pier, using the void left behind as the interpretive device.

The final installation follows the footprint of the last remaining section of Central Pier rather than the full historic structure, which once stretched 500 metres into Victoria Harbour and accommodated multiple cargo ships at a time.

Development Victoria says the project is guided by the Docklands Vision and Place Principles and the Central Pier Heritage Interpretation Strategy, and forms part of a broader package of temporary activations around the waterfront.

Those also include the "Pave and Play" floor games between Sunset Point and Yanonung Quay, and the replanting of the *We the Wild* garden at Yanonung Quay, with more initiatives planned in coming months.

Mr Cunningham said the agency had heard that the community was already enjoying the more open harbour space following the pier's removal, and said it would continue working with key stakeholders on longer-term revitalisation opportunities for Harbour Esplanade and the surrounding waterfront.

Whether *Echo* will be embraced as a meaningful tribute or seen by some as another expensive temporary gesture remains to be seen, with the installation understood to have come at a cost of around \$150,000.

When pressed about the installation's price tag, a DV spokesperson said *Echo* formed part of its broader investment in activating the Docklands waterfront over the coming years, and that it wasn't able to provide a cost breakdown at this time. ●

## Docklands filmmaker Emily-Kate Murphy returns from New York with major award for debut feature

For Docklands resident Emily-Kate Murphy, a recent trip to New York ended with more than just festival memories.

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



The 28-year-old filmmaker and actor returned home with a major international win after her self-produced debut feature *The Unspoken* took out a Diamond Globe award at the New York State International Film Festival.

It is a remarkable result for a first-time feature filmmaker, particularly one who financed the project herself, stepped back from full-time work to make it happen, and built the film largely through determination, instinct and the support of collaborators taking a leap alongside her.

Murphy, who has lived in Docklands for around two-and-a-half years, said the project began as a script she wrote in 2020 and initially never expected to make.

"*The Unspoken* I wrote years ago," she said. "I never was going to really do anything with it ... but it's a really powerful story."

The film centres on a young woman who falls pregnant during lockdown and makes the decision not to keep the baby. Murphy said the story took on new meaning after a 2024 trip to the United States, where conversations around reproductive rights felt far more immediate and politically charged than they had in Melbourne.

"I came home and I just had a lot of females around me that had just gone through something similar and hadn't told anyone about it," she said. "I kind of started mentioning the script to people just to get reactions and realised how much it kind of opened up people to have a conversation. So that's why I was like, 'I think I have to make this film'."

To do that, Murphy dropped down from her full-time management role at Goodlife Docklands, saved what money she could, and assembled a cast and crew largely through personal connections. Many involved were doing things for the first time, including the cinematographer, who had never shot a feature before.

"It was a lot of everyone's firsts," she said.

The 46-minute film was shot in Brunswick, mostly inside an Airbnb that Murphy gained permission to use. In one example of low-budget creativity, a bedroom was transformed into a doctor's office using blankets, first aid kits, wall signs and carefully controlled lighting.

The entire production was filmed in just four days.

DOCKLANDER



Murphy also acted in the film herself, while taking on writing, producing and directing responsibilities. She said she wanted the set to feel collaborative rather than hierarchical.

"If you've got an opinion or an idea, I want you to be comfortable to share it," she said. "That's why everyone was happy to do the long days and just push through because we were all involved."

In New York, Murphy sat at the back of the cinema to watch audience reactions. She said the film resonated deeply, including with men, and that one couple described it as "emotionally captivating".

Winning the award was a moment of validation in an industry better known for rejection than recognition.

"To actually have that 10 minutes of just recognition makes it all worth it," she said. "When I was finally alone, I did have a good cry of, 'oh my gosh, I did it!'"

Murphy is already moving on to her next projects, with another film set to shoot within weeks.

Longer term, Murphy hopes the momentum can help her break further into the Australian screen industry, while keeping one foot in both acting and filmmaking. And living in Docklands, she knows exactly what one dream milestone would look like: one day working just down the road at Docklands Studios.

But Murphy's New York success marks an important milestone: proof that a passionate Docklands local with a script, a small budget and plenty of courage can make something that connects far beyond Melbourne. ●

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**Sheena Watt** MP  
State Member for Northern Metropolitan

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# ATET legal mess lays bare major questions for the City of Melbourne

“

The \$7 million Supreme Court fight over Docklands floating events space ATET has now reached the point where the City of Melbourne can no longer plausibly present it as just another difficult regulatory dispute.

”

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



The council has admitted liability. Its barrister then returned to court two days later trying to narrow what that admission meant. The case is now delayed again, the trial has become part-heard, and ratepayers are left staring at what could be a very large compensation bill, plus years of legal costs, in a saga that should never have been allowed to spiral this far.

That is now the central fact around which all the other questions sit.

How did the council allow this to drag on for so long? Why, having now admitted liability in open court, did it not settle the matter? If the City knew throughout that the venue had been operating within the relevant noise framework, why did it push ahead with steps that have now resulted in an admission of unlawful termination?

And, most importantly for the public, who is accountable for creating a situation in which millions of dollars may now be paid out over the mishandling of one Docklands venue?

Those are not rhetorical questions anymore. They are the understandable questions that now flow from the council's own conduct in court.

The pivotal moment came on April 21, day six of the trial, when legal counsel for the City Jonathan Wilkinson told Justice Matthew Connock: "Council admits liability on the plaintiffs' pleaded claim." He added that further evidence on liability was no longer required and that the case would proceed on the question of quantum only.

That was a profound concession. It meant the City was no longer contesting the heart of the case. The judge immediately pressed for clarity, observing that an admission of liability on the pleaded claims appeared to carry with it the implied good faith allegations, breach and causation of loss, leaving damages as the remaining issue.

In ordinary circumstances, that should have brought the matter to a relatively clear next stage. Instead, it opened a fresh round of uncertainty.

Later that day, the council told *Docklands News*: "The City of Melbourne has admitted liability to Floating Spaces due to a procedural issue." It added that, because the matter remained before the court, it would be inappropriate to comment further.

That procedural issue is understood to relate to a revised EPA report that, while not altering the finding of maximum exceedances, should, as a matter of fairness, have been provided to ATET owner Jake Hughes.

When the case resumed on April 23 after a judicial mediation, the parties told the court they had made progress but could not settle. Then a new problem emerged. The City was no longer speaking with the clarity it had shown two days earlier. Its barrister began explaining that while the council maintained admissions in relation to the implied terms of good faith, breach of clause 4.1 (termination) and the background music demands, there remained "some things that we have always denied, and continue to deny".

That set off a visibly uncomfortable and awkward exchange.

An at-times incensed Justice Connock had to walk Mr Wilkinson through the pleadings and point out that the relocation representations the council was now trying to distance itself from formed part of the pleaded breach of good faith case. "Council's position, as stated in open court, was that it admitted liability in respect of the pleaded claims," he said, before asking directly whether the council was now seeking to withdraw some aspect of that admission. The City's answer was telling: it admitted "the termination, the unlawfulness of the termination" but said it did not admit the relocation representations.

In plain English, the City had admitted the main thing, then returned trying to narrow the road into damages.

That may have been a forensic attempt to save money. But in practical terms it looked like a council struggling to hold a coherent

position after making a major concession. The judge described the resulting situation as "unsatisfactory" and accepted that council CEO Alison Leighton would now likely need to be cross-examined before expert evidence could proceed. He also directed the parties to clarify admissions and denials in writing and to amend the pleadings again.

That matters enormously because Ms Leighton appears to sit at the centre of the whole affair.

She was acting CEO from October 22, 2022, until July 1, 2023, the critical period in which ATET opened, complaints escalated, the council issued its default notice, and the venue was ultimately shut down. She then became permanent CEO following the resignation of former chief executive Justin Hanney.

Reading the sequence in court, it is difficult to ignore the possibility that the admission of liability on day six had another strategic purpose: to avoid Ms Leighton having to be cross-examined on liability issues. Earlier that same morning, the judge had already said he expected to address the structure of the remaining evidence "at the end of the evidence today with Ms Leighton, in the event that the matter is proceeding." Then, after the admission, no more liability evidence was said to be needed.

When queried about the day six events, Mr Hughes told *Docklands News*, "they couldn't let her take the stand, because then the truth would have been exposed."

But once the City tried to wind back the breadth of that admission on day seven, the plaintiffs immediately said Ms Leighton would be required to give evidence on the live issues that remained. The council accepted that was "the appropriate course". Another directions hearing was held on April 30, with the council requesting further mediation and Ms Leighton likely required to be cross-examined in July.

That is a remarkable turn of events. It suggests a council that wanted the benefit of

conceding enough to stop the liability fight, while still preserving room to cut down the damages case later. Instead, it ended up reopening the very evidentiary problem it appeared to be trying to avoid.

The broader evidence in the case has only sharpened those questions.

Former Invest Melbourne chief executive Peter Armstrong, whose agency had helped facilitate the ATET project, told the court that when it was put to him that Ms Leighton would say she encouraged multiple parties to deal directly with Mr Hughes, his response was: "that's a blatant lie." In re-examination he went further, saying: "because they tried to choke it down. We were excluded." He also gave evidence that discussion led by Ms Leighton at one meeting was "around the steps to work towards a breach notice being issued to ATET."

Those are serious claims. They do not, on their own, prove wrongdoing. But they do go to the larger question of how the City's internal processes shifted from facilitation and problem-solving to enforcement and shutdown.

The council's own public response so far has leaned heavily on complaints. It has said it did not take the issue lightly, that ATET generated a record number of complaints, and that it worked extensively with the operator to find solutions. That is part of the story. The trial evidence from council planning officer Julian Edwards certainly supports the proposition that complaint numbers were unusually high at the start. He described at least 130 complaints after opening weekend as "off the charts".

But the case is now plainly about far more than complaints.

The real issue is whether the council unlawfully shut down a business that it had once publicly championed and that, on the evidence aired so far, had continued to put forward options including noise attenuation, relocation and structural changes. If that is where this ends up, then the question ceases to be whether ATET was controversial. The question becomes why the council chose a path that has now led to admitted liability, wasted court time, and a growing exposure that ratepayers will ultimately have to fund.

This is what makes the ATET case more than a dispute about a floating nightclub. It goes to whether the public can have confidence in the way decisions are made at Town Hall, especially when political heat is high and pressure is coming from all sides. Councils are expected to exercise power lawfully, fairly and carefully. They are also expected, once they are clearly in trouble, not to compound the damage.

On that measure, this case is becoming harder and harder for the City of Melbourne to explain away.

The longer it drags on, the higher the legal bill climbs. The more the legal bill climbs, the harder it becomes to avoid the final question. Not just what went wrong, but who, exactly, will wear it. ●

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## Lendlease completes latest Docklands housing project at Melbourne Quarter

Lendlease has officially completed its latest major residential project on the edge of Docklands, with the opening of West Tower at Melbourne Quarter marking the final piece of the broader Melbourne Quarter precinct opposite Southern Cross Station.

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



Announced on April 22, the 45-storey tower is being described as Australia's largest build-to-rent tower and adds 797 new rental homes to the western edge of the CBD. Delivered in partnership with Daiwa House Australia, the project includes a mix of furnished and unfurnished studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments aimed at providing longer-term rental security in a well-connected inner-city location.

For Docklands and the CBD fringe, the project is notable not only for its scale but also because it marks the completion of Melbourne Quarter, a 2.5-hectare urban renewal precinct more than 13 years in the making. According to Lendlease, the precinct is already home to more than 1800 residents and supports a daily workforce of more than 12,000 people across four office buildings, two residential towers, retail, dining, laneways and public space.

The completion of West Tower was marked in April by a ceremony attended by Japanese ambassador Kazuhiro Suzuki, Victorian Housing and Building Minister Nick Staikos, federal Melbourne MP Sarah Witty and Lord Mayor Nick Reece.

Designed by Melbourne firm Fender Katsalidis, the tower includes a range of resident amenities, including a rooftop lounge and terrace, private dining spaces, a bowling alley, home theatre, golf simulator, co-working areas, music and podcast studios, and access to health and wellness facilities in the neighbouring East Tower, including a pool, spa, sauna and steam room.

Lendlease executive director development Adam Williams said the project responded to continued demand for housing close to transport, jobs and education.

"The completion of West Tower is a significant milestone, adding a welcome new supply of homes to Melbourne and meeting continued demand for well-located housing close to public transport, jobs and education," he said.

Daiwa House Australia chief executive Koji Morishige said the tower was already beginning to fill, with hundreds of residents now living in the building.

The project also reflects the growing role of build-to-rent in Melbourne's inner-city housing mix, with West Tower the latest in a broader pipeline of Lendlease residential developments across Melbourne. The company says it currently has more than 2300 homes under construction or in delivery across the city. ●



## MV Steve Irwin returns to Docklands as Ship 4 Good brings new life to Victoria Harbour

“One of the world's most recognisable conservation vessels has returned to Docklands, with the famous MV Steve Irwin now berthed in Victoria Harbour for a new chapter focused on community access, education and activation”

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



Now operating under the banner "Ship 4 Good", the vessel is owned by Kerrie Goodall, who told *Docklands News* she had effectively rescued the ship from the scrapyard and was determined to give it a second life in Melbourne.

For Docklands, the arrival is more than a curiosity. It is exactly the kind of large-scale maritime presence Victoria Harbour was designed to host, and a timely reminder of what the precinct's deep-water harbour can still offer when it is used well.

The *Steve Irwin* is best known for its decade of anti-whaling campaigns in the Southern Ocean, where it was operated by the global conservation movement founded by Captain Paul Watson. During that time, the ship became a symbol of direct-action environmentalism and gained international fame through *Whale Wars*, with campaigns aimed at disrupting illegal whaling and protecting marine life.

According to Ms Goodall, the vessel helped save more than 6000 whales.

"It's a very important vessel to commemorate what can be done by determined people to protect the environment," she said.

"It's a great story of resilience and courage and hope and imagination."

Ms Goodall has owned the ship for seven years, though she said that was never originally the plan. She had first secured a lease arrangement to create a pop-up museum celebrating the conservation achievements

associated with the vessel, which successfully operated in Docklands during the summer of 2019.

However, what followed was a far more difficult journey.

She said the ship was eventually left without the support she had expected, COVID intervened, and the infrastructure where the ship had been berthed was later condemned, forcing it to be moved under tow to Newcastle.

There, she and her dog lived aboard the vessel for four years while working to restore it.

"It was deemed as scrap when I took it on and now it's a functional vessel," she said.

With the help of engineers, including former crew members who had served on its Antarctic campaigns, the *Steve Irwin* was recently brought back to life and sailed under its own power to Melbourne for the first time in seven years.

That alone is a remarkable story. But the next phase may be just as important for Docklands.

Ms Goodall said the ship would be opened up to the public over the coming months through curated tours, projection shows, art installations and events, all designed to reconnect people with the vessel's history and inspire a new generation around ocean conservation.

Visitors will be able to tour the ship with Bluetooth audio and QR-linked content, view campaign images and footage, and learn more about its history through art and interpretation. A resident artist, Victor Holder, has also created a digital animated projection work, *SEAing is Believing*, telling the story of the ship's Antarctic campaigns.

Importantly, some of those activations will spill out beyond the ship itself. Evening projection shows will be visible from the promenade, with silent cinema headphones offered so audiences can experience the work without disturbing nearby residents.

"We appreciate this is a high-density residential area. We want to be respectful for residents and businesses," Ms Goodall said.

"So, it's all low impact. We've gone to a lot of trouble to come up with some unique ways to entertain people and educate and inspire."

That approach feels especially valuable in Docklands at a time when the precinct has been crying out for more authentic waterfront activity.

In recent years, the area has too often struggled to make full use of its maritime



setting. That has been made even more stark by the recent loss of Docklands' heritage fleet from North Wharf after Development Victoria pushed the vessels out of the precinct. Against that scenario, the arrival of a ship like the *Steve Irwin* is a reminder that Victoria Harbour is not just a backdrop, but a working deep-water harbour capable of hosting vessels that bring history, spectacle and public life.

It is also worth remembering that this was precisely the logic behind a 2021 City of Melbourne budget investment of \$1.9 million to replace the large vessels berth at Melbourne City Marina, with the stated aim of allowing ships to dock for public displays.

Docklands was built for this. And while the *Steve Irwin* may only be here for a limited period before further works in Tasmania and possible touring elsewhere, Ms Goodall said her hope was ultimately to secure a longer-term home port in Melbourne that would allow the ship to spend up to 10 months a year here.

For now, Docklands has the chance to embrace something it should be seeing much more of: a major ship with a real story, opened up to the public, adding meaning and energy to the waterfront. ●

# Preventing litter entering Victoria Harbour from the Yarra River

Since my last update in the April *Docklands News*, I've continued pressing for a practical solution to prevent rubbish entering Victoria Harbour from the Yarra River.

WORDS BY  
HARVEY CLEGGETT



My proposal remains straightforward: to trial a "proof of concept" floating boom at the Bolte Bridge pylons to intercept litter before it reaches the harbour, an initiative that will cost less than \$30,000 to install.

Progress is occurring, but regrettably not fast enough. However, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Following my article in *Docklands News*, I was advised by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action that the then Environment Minister, Steve Dimopoulos, reconsidered his earlier decision not to proceed with the proposal. On April 9, he requested Parks Victoria to recontact me for renewed discussions. The role of Environment Minister is now the responsibility of Enver Erdogan.

Contact from Parks Victoria occurred on April 20. Unfortunately, what was offered, was in my view, more of the same obfuscation. The main concern raised by their director was the additional staff workload involved in collecting rubbish trapped by the proposed boom at the Bolte Bridge.

To confirm that this issue was in fact influencing senior management decision-making, I was provided with a written statement from Parks Victoria maritime and waterways director, Sarah Auld, which read: "Any staff time put to this matter would reduce

staff time available for environmental works, asset maintenance and public safety activities."

To me, that response spoke volumes. It highlighted that the real obstacle here was not whether the idea would work, but whether Parks Victoria was prepared to prioritise the health of Victoria Harbour in the way many residents would request and expect.

This is despite Parks Victoria's obligations under the *Parks Victoria Act 2018*, which "reinforces its responsibility for the long-term stewardship of the Yarra and to ensure it remains an accessible and protected natural asset".

I have also been disappointed by the lack of direct engagement from the minister's office. Over six months I sent five emails and did not receive any acknowledgement, or an opportunity to discuss the proposal directly. That has meant I have not had the chance to explain why I believe the minister has been poorly advised on this issue.

On a more positive note, I've had encouraging engagement from the Shadow Environment Minister Nick McGowan, who has shown strong interest in the proposal. He has prepared a suite of questions to raise in Parliament during May in which he will be seeking a full explanation as to why Parks Victoria has refused to consider the proof-of-concept boom, requesting reasons why.

I have also approached 3AW seeking an interview with Tom Elliott. Their producer has acknowledged the request and is working towards organising an interview, which I hope will happen sometime in May. A similar request has been made to *A Current Affair* and I will continue to pursue that.

I've also written to the executive officers of the AFL, Gurner, Lendlease and MAB, providing them with an update, and asking whether they would further support the proposal by contacting the Environment



Minister directly.

Most importantly, I am asking Victoria Harbour residents to have their say.

With around 19,000 residents currently living in Victoria Harbour, and that figure expected to increase to 30,000 or even 35,000 over the next five years, this issue matters deeply to our community. I have therefore prepared an online petition so residents can register their support for the "boom trial" by entering their name, post-code and any comments they wish to make.

I cannot stress enough how important local support will prove to be in this endeavour. If residents, along with their families and friends, get behind the petition, it will

add real weight to the proposal, making it difficult for decision-makers to ignore.

My position remains simple: if we can stop rubbish before it enters Victoria Harbour, then we should. I invite everyone who cares about the harbour to come on board and support this proposal. ●

Please scan  
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## The Docklands Directory 2026 is out now!

The directory is a guide to, and celebration of businesses throughout Docklands, it is an essential resource for both residents and visitors.

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# Heart Week 2026: “Never Miss a BEAT” with vital health checks

As Heart Week 2026 kicks off across Australia from May 4 to 10, health experts and the National Heart Foundation are issuing a critical call to action: “Never miss a BEAT”.

This year’s campaign shifts the focus from general awareness to a specific, life-saving medical appointment – the Heart Health Check.

Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in Australia, claiming a life every 18 minutes. Despite these sobering statistics, many Australians remain unaware of their personal risk. Because high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol often present no visible symptoms, thousands of people are living with “silent” risks that could lead to catastrophic events like heart attacks or strokes.

**The 20-minute appointment that could save your life**

The cornerstone of this year’s Heart Week is the promotion of the Heart Health Check. Unlike the rigorous stress tests often depicted in media, a standard check-up is non-invasive and takes around 20 minutes.

During the consultation, a GP or nurse conducts several key assessments:

- **Biometric screening:** Checking blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood sugar.
- **Medical history:** A deep dive into family history, particularly looking for immediate relatives who may have suffered heart events before age 60.
- **Lifestyle review:** A conversation about diet, physical activity, smoking status, and alcohol consumption.

“Common types of heart disease, including heart attacks and strokes, can be prevented through these regular checks,” the Heart Foundation says. By inputting this

data into a clinical calculator, GPs can estimate the likelihood of a patient having a heart attack or stroke in the next five years.

**Who should be booking?**  
While heart health is a lifelong priority, Medicare provides specific subsidies for those at higher statistical risk. Australians aged 45 and over who do not already have heart disease are eligible for an annual Heart Health Check. However, the window opens earlier for specific groups: First Nations peoples are encouraged to start checks from age 30, and those living with diabetes are eligible from age 35.

**Understanding your “heart age”**  
To bridge the gap between clinical data and public understanding, the Heart Foundation’s “Heart Age Calculator” has become a vital tool this year. Designed for those aged 35-75, the online tool allows individuals to see if their heart is “older” than their actual age.

A “heart age” higher than your chronological age serves as a biological red flag, indicating that modifiable risk factors – like BMI or blood pressure – need urgent attention. While the calculator is a powerful motivational tool, health professionals emphasise that it does not replace the comprehensive assessment provided by a GP.

**Taking control: beyond the clinic**

The Heart Week 2026 campaign also highlights the interconnectedness of heart health, kidney function, and diabetes. Managing one often protects the others. For those identified as “intermediate” or “high” risk, a GP will typically develop a multi-step plan.

- This might include:
- **Referrals:** working with dietitians to improve nutritional intake.
  - **Prescriptions:** using medication to lower high cholesterol or stabilize blood pressure.
  - **Activity plans:** implementing structured

walking programs or quitting smoking.

**How to get involved**

The Heart Foundation is encouraging workplaces and community groups to “put a spotlight on heart health” by sharing resources and starting conversations. For individuals, the message is simple: visit the Heart Foundation website to calculate your heart age and, most importantly, book that 20-minute appointment with your local clinic. If you need a dietitian appointment, then please book in with Amanda at Docklands Health.

As we move through Heart Week, the goal is clear: by identifying risks early, we can ensure that more Australians “never miss a beat” with their loved ones. ●

**Dr Mike Edgley**

CHIROPRACTOR  
DOCKLANDS HEALTH



## Teen and man charged after second fire attack on Docklands restaurant in three years

Docklands restaurant Almina was targeted in an early-morning arson attack on May 2, the second time in three years the venue has been hit by a suspicious fire.

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



The latest incident is also being reviewed by Victoria Police as part of the continuing series of suspicious fires targeting licensed venues across inner Melbourne.

Police said two males had been charged after the attack at the Docklands Drive restaurant about 3.30am on Saturday, May 2.

Police allege the pair smashed glass doors, entered the venue and poured accelerant inside before setting it alight. The fire caused minor damage before it was extinguished.

According to police, the males then fled south along Docklands Drive and attempted to get into an allegedly stolen vehicle, before being disturbed by uniform officers who were already patrolling the area. They allegedly ran from the scene but were later found hiding under the Bolte Bridge in Ron Barassi Snr Park and arrested

without further incident. A third male was also located in a vehicle on Docklands Drive, where police allegedly seized jerry cans.

A 16-year-old boy from the Glen Eira area has been charged with criminal damage by fire, reckless conduct endangering life and burglary, and was remanded to appear before a children’s court. A 22-year-old Fitzroy North man has been charged with the same offences and was remanded to appear before Melbourne Magistrates’ Court. A 19-year-old Collingwood man was interviewed and released pending further investigation.

Melbourne Crime Investigation Unit detectives are leading the investigation, while detectives from Operation Eclipse are also reviewing the matter to determine whether it is linked to the recent spate of attacks on bars, restaurants and other licensed premises across the inner city.

The latest fire revives troubling memories for the Docklands venue, which was also targeted in December 2023. In that incident, police were called to Almina, then operating at Glenti Place, after offenders were seen smashing a window before allegedly using accelerant to set the restaurant alight about 2.50am. The blaze caused extensive damage and came amid another series of suspicious attacks on Docklands restaurants, including multiple fires at NewQuay Promenade venue Karisma.

This time, while the damage to Almina was described as minor, the nature of the alleged offending, involving forced entry, accelerant and an attempted escape in a stolen car, is still concerning for local traders and hospitality operators.

The Docklands incident is the latest in



a string of alarming arson attacks affecting hospitality venues in recent months, following similar incidents in the CBD and Southbank. Those attacks have raised growing concern among venue operators and business owners, with police last month establishing Operation Eclipse to investigate what they believe may involve serious and organised crime syndicates, as well as to determine the motive behind the offending.

Police have not yet commented on any specific motive behind the Docklands attack, and investigations remain ongoing.

Anyone with information about suspicious activity connected to the broader series of incidents is urged to contact Victoria Police or Crime Stoppers. ●

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## Docklands deserves to grow as a real neighbourhood

Docklands has always represented a different side of Melbourne's CBD, one shaped by renewal, ambition and a sense of what a modern, connected city can look like.

**WORDS BY**  
SARAH WITTY – FEDERAL MP



But over the past few months, what has become clear to me is that behind the striking skyline and waterfront views is a growing community asking practical questions about how this precinct evolves.

Since the start of the year, I've spent time in Docklands meeting with residents, local workers and small business owners. It is a unique part of the electorate: quieter than the city core in some ways but facing its own distinct pressures. Conversations here often centre on connectivity, safety and the need to build a stronger sense of neighbourhood.

One of the most consistent themes I've heard is access, both physical and social. Docklands is well-positioned, but it can still feel disconnected. Whether it is public transport links, pedestrian access, or simply the flow of foot traffic needed to sustain local businesses, there is a clear desire to see the area better integrated with the rest of the city. A good example of that growing connection is Kangan Institute, where I saw

firsthand how investment in education can deliver real outcomes for people and help strengthen the local community.

Local traders have spoken to me about the opportunities Docklands presents, but also the challenges. Weekday office traffic has not fully stabilised, and weekend visitation can be uneven. For small businesses, that unpredictability matters. What they are looking for is activation: events, community programming and planning decisions that bring more consistent life to the precinct. To help inform my work, I met with the Community3008 group to hear directly from residents and others helping turn

Docklands into a stronger community.

I have also met with residents in some of Docklands' apartment communities, where the conversation often turns to liveability. Issues such as green space, local services and community infrastructure come up frequently. Docklands was designed as a place to live as well as work, but there is more to do to ensure it feels like a fully realised neighbourhood.

That includes thinking carefully about how development continues. Growth is important, but it needs to be matched with the infrastructure that supports it: schools, health services, public space and transport.

Done well, Docklands can be a model for high-density urban living that does not compromise on quality of life.

There are positive signs. I've attended local events along the waterfront that show what Docklands can be at its best: engaged, active and welcoming. I've spoken with community groups building stronger connections between residents, and with organisations exploring new ways to use public space.

In Parliament, I've been focused on how federal priorities intersect with these local realities. Investment in infrastructure, support for small business and broader cost-of-living measures all have a direct impact on communities like Docklands. But just as importantly, it is about ensuring that the voices of residents here are part of those national conversations.

Docklands is still, in many ways, a work in progress. That is not a weakness, but an opportunity. The decisions we make now will shape how this precinct feels and functions for years to come.

What I've taken from my time in Docklands this year is a strong sense that people want to be part of that process. They want a precinct that is not just well designed, but well lived in. A place where businesses can thrive, where residents feel connected and where public spaces are genuinely shared.

That is the future I will continue to advocate for: one where Docklands is not just a destination, but a community in its own right. Because like every part of Melbourne, its success will ultimately be measured not just by its buildings, but by the everyday experiences of the people who live and work there. ●

## Vale Michael Silver – president of MAGNET GALLERIES

A very well-known photographer, Michael Silver was farewelled on Sunday, April 26 by his family, friends and the wider photographic community at an event celebrating his life and work.

MAGNET GALLERIES in The District Docklands was filled to overflowing with his colleagues who wanted to acknowledge him as one of Melbourne's top photographers and to recall the way he taught them, mentored them and encouraged them in their own photographic practice.

Starting in the darkroom at Allen's Studios in Collingwood at age 15, Michael learned his craft on the job and was always confident

about his ability with a camera. A press photographer for much of his career, he was a staffer on several Australian newspapers including the great old *Sun News-Pictorial* in Melbourne, and as a freelancer for Fleet Street papers during his years in the UK.

Later he started a freelance business and acquired a stellar line-up of clients - Federal and State Government departments, academia (particularly the University of Melbourne),

Tenix the shipbuilders, the Victoria Police, Melbourne Zoo, hospitals, commercial corporations, all the big sporting events and numerous charities. His work took him all over the world and he revelled in "getting the picture" wherever he went. He was one of the earliest adopters of digital photography and encouraged so many other photographers to follow his lead.

In later years he moved into running

photographic galleries in partnership with his wife, Susanne, culminating in the creation of MAGNET, a not-for-profit centre of photography.

He saw MAGNET as a place where good photography could be appreciated and understood and where professionals and amateurs alike were supported in their practice.

He was willing to take risks and in 2022, with COVID still raging around the world, he was able to attract the top documentary exhibition – *World Press Photo* – to MAGNET. This annual world-renowned competition-exhibition had never been shown in Melbourne before.

A posthumous display of Michael's work is showing at MAGNET in the aftermath of his memorial event and Susanne will continue to work on his planned book which will be published later in the year. ●



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## State agencies continue to fall short – Docklands deserves better

Three State Government agencies – Parks Victoria (PV), Melbourne Water (MW), and Development Victoria (DV) – continue to fall short in their obligations to the Docklands community.

Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network (MMHN) calls out two persistent failures; the ongoing mismanagement of litter in Victoria Harbour and Development Victoria's inadequate response to the heritage conditions attached to the demolition of Central Pier.

### Litter in Victoria Harbour: a funded responsibility being ignored

Litter in Victoria Harbour is not a trivial matter. Parks Victoria is the primary agency funded to remove floating litter from the Birrarung/Yarra River and Victoria Harbour. Melbourne Water shares this responsibility. Neither agency is fulfilling it.

In March 2026, the state government announced a \$19.2 million environment package to revitalise rivers and waterways. In April 2026, Minister Harriet Shing was appointed Minister for Water, a role she held from 2022 to 2024. MMHN welcomes this renewed focus, but the fundamental problem remains; both state agencies focus on trapping litter upstream, while litter already in our waterways continues to accumulate unchecked. What we see with our own eyes in Victoria Harbour tells us that the current approach is not working.

MMHN strongly supports Docklands resident Harvey Cleggett, who has researched this litter issue thoroughly and proposed a cost-effective strategy to address the problem directly. Regrettably, his proposals appear to have encountered the deflection and delay that is all too familiar when dealing with these state agencies. It is telling that private investors have shown more genuine appreciation for the value of our waterways than the public bodies charged with protecting them.

MMHN also recalls PV's extraordinary response when we previously complained

about overflowing litter traps in prominent locations. Rather than address the problem, PV claimed the overflow "served to educate the public" about litter. This kind of bureaucratic disrespect and complacency is precisely what Minister Shing should closely scrutinise before committing further public funds.

MMHN urges the community to write directly to Minister Shing, the CEO of Parks Victoria, and the CEO of Melbourne Water to raise concerns and ensure this long-standing litter issue receives the attention it deserves.

### Questionable Heritage Interpretation – Echo in Victoria Harbour

DV's record in Docklands has long been a source of frustration – the eviction of the Heritage Fleet, the neglect of wharves beneath Collins Wharf, and the protracted neglect leading to the demolition of Central Pier are well documented DV failures. This pattern is continuing.

The heritage-listed waterways of Victoria Harbour have suddenly been intentionally littered by the Echo installation; a large cluster of hundreds of white plastic floating cones bobbing around where Central Pier once stood.

MMHN views this installation as a misguided expenditure of an undisclosed amount enabled by a regrettable quirk in Heritage Victoria's Demolition Permit process which required Central Pier be appropriately "referenced" so that the public remains aware of its significant heritage value. The permit also allowed DV to submit a variation which regrettably meant HV assesses its merit. This process is flawed.

This echo of Central Pier will not attract visitors and will obviously not provide the economic activation once delivered through Central Pier. DV appears not to have considered the practical issues likely to arise with Echo, including its negative impact on recreational boating, the risk of litter snagging on the cones, and the possibility of the cones themselves becoming hazards.

Communication from DV has been non-existent. This is clearly no way to



manage the heritage-listed asset of Victoria Harbour which is one of Melbourne's most unique precincts. Community3008 did not provide clarity on this matter.

### A clear ask

This brings us back to familiar territory; DV's obligation to Docklands is not yet fulfilled. As the responsible state agency, DV is required to provide genuine vision for its future, one that takes heritage seriously, delivers permanent meaningful public activation, and treats the community with respect rather than an afterthought. MMHN has outlined a proposal which is an opportunity to build that future. See [docklandsnews.com.au/momentum-building-for-harbour-esplanade-revitalisation-project](https://docklandsnews.com.au/momentum-building-for-harbour-esplanade-revitalisation-project)

MMHN calls on Development Victoria to:

- Publish a clear explanation of how Echo genuinely satisfies the original Heritage Victoria Demolition Permit conditions.
- Engage the community and heritage stakeholders in developing a credible,

long-term plan for maritime heritage interpretation at Docklands.

- Treat the new residential developments as an opportunity to invest in and seriously engage with permanent precinct activation to benefit the existing community.

MMHN remains committed to advocating for the Docklands community and Melbourne's maritime heritage, and to ensuring that Victoria Harbour receives the recognition and value it deserves.

Become a member and join MMHN. ●

### Jackie Watts

CHAIR

INFO@MMHN.ORG.AU



## CHAMBER UPDATE

## Continuing to support business in Docklands

As president of the Docklands Chamber of Commerce, I am proud to represent a business community that continues to grow, innovate and collaborate.

### WORDS BY

DANIEL HIBBERD – PRESIDENT

Our Chamber exists to foster a positive, united business environment that supports both established and emerging businesses, while contributing to the overall liveability of Docklands.

Since our establishment in 2003, the Chamber has played a vital role in advocating for local business interests and working constructively with government, industry partners and community organisations.

Today our members range from sole traders and hospitality operators through to major organisations such as The District, Marvel Stadium and Port Phillip Ferries. This

diversity strengthens our voice and ensures Docklands continues to evolve as a vibrant business precinct.

In 2026, the Chamber is focused on creating meaningful opportunities for members to connect, promote their businesses and shape the future of Docklands.

We are excited to launch several new initiatives in the coming months, including the seafood-themed Docklands Waterfront Farmers' Market on May 17, implementation of Destination Docklands, regular networking events and the launch of our new logo and website, which will allow us to better profile and promote member businesses.

Our events provide a forum for collaboration, information sharing and advocacy on key issues such as access, transport, public space and economic development. I warmly invite local businesses to join us and be part of shaping Docklands' future.

We will be attending the May 17 Docklands Waterfront Farmers' Market, so come and talk to us at our stall. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss how we can assist your business.

[docklandsc.com.au](https://docklandsc.com.au) ●



# Docklands needs a budget that plans for the community it is today

Docklands is no longer a future suburb. It is a living, growing community.

WORDS BY  
JAMAL HAKIM

Every year, more residents, families, workers, visitors and small businesses make Docklands their home. The precinct holds enormous potential, not only as a residential neighbourhood, but as one of Melbourne's most distinctive waterfront communities.

That is why the City of Melbourne's 2026-27 budget matters. For Community3008, the question is simple: will this budget help Docklands grow with purpose, or will it allow the suburb to continue evolving through disconnected, ad hoc decisions?

Our submission to the draft budget focuses on four priorities that have consistently emerged through community engagement: family liveability, a strategic approach to our waterways and Harbour Esplanade, a pet-friendly community, and greening Docklands.

At the heart of this is Harbour Esplanade and Victoria Harbour. Harbour Esplanade

should be one of Melbourne's great civic spaces, linking the CBD to the water and supporting tourism, hospitality, recreation and community life. But without a contemporary master plan, there is a real risk the area will continue to be shaped by one-off projects and short-term decisions.

Community3008 is calling for the immediate start of a Harbour Esplanade Master Plan, alongside a broader Victoria Harbour Master Plan. These plans should be developed with the City of Melbourne, Development Victoria and the Docklands community, and should consider the full waterfront experience, including Victoria Harbour Promenade and NewQuay Promenade.

This matters because Docklands' water is not empty space waiting to be filled. It is the defining feature that makes this suburb different. Any major decision affecting Victoria Harbour should happen within a proper planning framework and with genuine local consultation.

Docklands also needs a more deliberate approach to parks, recreation and open space. As the population grows, so too does the need for places where children can play, families can gather, residents can exercise and dog owners can responsibly enjoy public space.

The suburb has limited remaining open space, which means every part of it matters. Areas that are currently underused, such as

parts of North Wharf or land near Moonee Ponds Creek, should be planned with imagination and care. They could become nature trails, Indigenous history pathways, informal recreation spaces or community activity areas.

We also need to look honestly at whether Docklands has enough accessible play areas for younger children. Ron Barassi Snr Park is important, but it does not meet every need, especially for families in NewQuay and other parts of the suburb. Smaller interventions such as flexible play spaces, moveable cricket nets or better use of low-traffic spaces could make a real difference.

A maturing suburb must also balance the needs of children, families and pet owners. Docklands has many residents with dogs, and that is part of the community's character. But planning must also protect safe, hygienic and welcoming environments for children. That balance requires review, planning and investment.

Greening Docklands is another essential priority. In a suburb dominated by high-rise buildings, hard surfaces and exposed waterfront spaces, greening is not decorative. It is infrastructure for liveability.

More trees, canopy cover, native gardens, pocket parks, green promenades, rooftop and balcony greening, and better seating can reduce heat, improve biodiversity and create a stronger sense of place. Docklands should be clearly included in the city's

greening programs.

The floating wetlands trial in the Yarra River and Victoria Harbour is a good example of the kind of practical, nature-based intervention that should be made permanent and expanded. If the trial has worked, the next step should be maintenance, protection and growth.

There are also basic maintenance issues that cannot be ignored. Many Docklands streets and footpaths are affected by subsidence, creating uneven surfaces and tripping hazards. Residents should not have to rely on temporary patch-ups. The City should fund a proper audit of footpath conditions and commit to repairs where needed.

Finally, Docklands needs continued support for community life. New suburbs do not automatically become connected communities. They need places, rituals, events and repeated opportunities for people to meet. Initiatives such as the Docklands Farmers' Market should continue to be trialled and supported while the suburb matures.

Docklands needs more than maintenance and isolated projects. It needs a budget that protects our harbour, plans our open space, greens our streets, supports our families, welcomes our pets, fixes our footpaths and invests in community life.

Most of all, it needs a budget that stops treating Docklands as unfinished and starts treating it as a community worth planning for. ●

## OWNERS' CORPORATION LAW

### Why it pays to grant access to private apartments to the owners' corporation

Lot owners and tenants need to be aware that an owners' corporation (OC) has a lawful right to serve a notice to gain entry to private apartments, in order to carry out repairs, maintenance and other remedial works.

In a recent case determined by Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), an OC in Docklands was granted access by order to enter a residential apartment to erect swing stages to allow for façade repairs.

The lot owner had earlier refused access by seeking to impose unreasonable conditions of entry to their apartment, such as requiring the OC to pay compensation of \$100 per day, and to only enter the apartment during certain hours, and to only have a right of access for a finite duration of time (30 days maximum).

VCAT awarded the OC \$13,000 in damages, finding that the OC incurred more costs in the remedial repairs project by virtue of the delays in not getting access to the apartment, and because it had to complete the remedial repairs in two different stages by coming back to the site at a later time.

VCAT also has a general discretion to award legal costs in special circumstances too.

The OC is required to give a notice in writing, and it must provide at least seven days' notice to the owner, and if the lot is

tenanted, then the notice must go to both landlord and tenant.

Once properly served, the lot owner or tenant must grant entry to the OC and its agents, contractors and servants.

In addition to these very wide powers, an OC may also gain access without providing seven days' notice, in an emergency, in circumstances where there is a water leak, or an interruption to a service such as electricity, gas, electricity, telephone, water, drainage and the like.

If a lot owner or tenant refuses entry or permission to enter, then the OC may apply to VCAT for a formal order of access.

If an access order is granted, VCAT may also award damages to the OC if the resident's failure to provide access caused them to incur costs or exacerbated damage to other lots and the common property.

It does not seem to matter if the OC is requiring access to the apartment for one hour, one day or one month.

Therefore, lot owners and tenants need to be very cognisant of their rights and responsibilities when they receive these types of notices from their OC manager or building manager. ●

**Tom Bacon**

STRATA TITLE LAWYERS

TOM@STRATATITELAWYERS.COM.AU



## DOCKLANDS REPRESENTATIVE GROUP

### Bullying in strata

Social media platforms are replete with allegations of bullying within owners' corporations.

Reports span every direction - strata managers targeting individual owners, owners directing hostility toward committees, and committee chairs exerting undue pressure on fellow members. The permutations are manifold, but the impact is consistent: dysfunction, distress, and disengagement.

While the *Owners Corporations Act 2006 (Vic)* does not explicitly define "bullying," related concepts can be drawn from broader legal frameworks. Workplace bullying, as described by WorkSafe Victoria, involves repeated unreasonable behaviour that creates a risk to health and safety. Applied to strata communities, similar conduct (such as intimidation, exclusion, threats or persistent harassment), may fall within this understanding, particularly where it affects a person's wellbeing or ability to participate in governance.

However, a key question is whether the residential strata environment is a workplace.

For some, it clearly is.

Yet one category of workers has received far less attention in this discussion - building management.

Building management in residential strata is a critical but often overlooked function. It spans a range of roles, from building managers overseeing daily operations to concierge and front desk staff providing resident services. Together, they form the operational backbone of many apartment communities.

Importantly, a significant proportion of this workforce may be employed under visa arrangements. This can create heightened vulnerability, with a worker's right to remain in Australia tied to ongoing employment. Within this context, anecdotal reports suggest some staff feel compelled to resign

rather than take entitled leave, even when adequate notice is given. These dynamics raise serious questions about power imbalances and whether some practices verge on exploitation.

Concerns have also been raised about the culture within certain service providers and how this translates into their engagement with owners' corporations. Some committees report being threatened with the sudden withdrawal of staff or even termination of service agreements at short notice. Such tactics place committees under considerable pressure, particularly where building operations depend heavily on those personnel.

There are also informal reports of gendered dynamics, including instances of senior building management figures undermining female committee members. Tactics described include fostering division within committees - a classic "divide and conquer" approach. A divided committee is often a compliant one.

Whether this conduct constitutes bullying or aggressive commercial practice, it highlights a regulatory gap. Building management providers play a central role in strata communities, yet they are not explicitly addressed in the *Owners Corporations Act 2006 (Vic)*. As Victoria anticipates long-overdue reforms to the Act, there is a clear opportunity to recognise and regulate this influential sector, thereby ensuring accountability, transparency and fair treatment for all involved.

To subscribe to updates from Owners Corporation Network: [ocn.org.au](http://ocn.org.au) ●

**Janette Corcoran**

MEMBER

JCORCORAN@DOCKLANDS.ORG.AU





## WHAT'S ON May



From workshops to markets and festivals, you'll find something to float your boat this May in Docklands.



**COMMUNITY SOCIAL CRAFTING**  
Have you been looking for an inclusive, supportive, creative community crafting group? The Cauldron is a fabulous creative community space in Docklands hosting weekly social crafting sessions.  
**The Cauldron, The District Docklands**  
**EVERY WEDNESDAY, 5PM – 7PM**



**DOCKLANDS WATERFRONT FARMERS' MARKET**  
Docklands Farmers' Market will run monthly at Harbour Esplanade, featuring Victorian produce, artisan goods, seafood, entertainment, and direct farmer sales.  
**Harbour Esplanade, Docklands**  
**17 MAY – 15 NOVEMBER, 10AM – 3PM**



**BERTH'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA**  
Australia's Biggest Morning Tea is a community event that raises vital funds to make a big difference for those impacted by cancer. Tickets \$55 includes food, drinks, entertainment, and prizes.  
**Berth, 45 Newquay Promenade, Docklands**  
**THURSDAY 28 MAY, 11.30AM – 2.30PM**



**FIVE ELEMENT MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS**  
Learn to balance your true nature with life's seasons for health, happiness, prosperity and wellness through Autumn Embracing Change Method.  
**Buluk Park, 107 Victoria Harbour Prom.**  
**UNTIL 21 MAY, 6AM – 7AM**



**YARRA POINT'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA**  
Join us at Yarra Point's Biggest Morning Tea supporting the Cancer Council – enjoy a cup of tea, raffles and a live auction. Tickets \$25 – includes morning tea and 3 x raffle tickets.  
**Yarra's Edge Community Space**  
**THURSDAY 21 MAY, 10AM**



**MOTHER'S DAY CLASSIC**  
The Mother's Day Classic invites participants to walk or run, raising funds for breast and ovarian cancer research while supporting community efforts to end these diseases.  
**The Tan, Birdwood Ave**  
**SUNDAY 10 MAY, 6.45AM – 2.30PM**



**SONGBIRDS**  
Interactive songs, rhymes, and stories engage newborns to 18-month-olds, introducing language, rhythm, and early literacy. Programs run during school terms only.  
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